

Joffre Lakes

British Columbia, Canada

 6 Hour / 11 KM  Out and back  Medium



The view at Middle Joffre Lake © Karl Woll

Joffre Lakes is a popular hike located just north of Pemberton in Joffre Lakes Provincial Park. Easy trailhead access and gorgeous views make this a busy and well traveled trail during the summer. It is also a popular destination for ice climbers during the winter months for the same reasons.

An hour north of Whistler, this hike is pushing the boundaries of being called 'near' Vancouver. But, it is worth the trip, it is simply too spectacular not to hike.

There are three lakes you will pass on this hike, aptly named Lower, Middle and Upper Joffre Lakes. From the trailhead, Lower Joffre Lake is a flat 5 minute walk. The view from Lower Lake will give you a good vantage point of your end goal; the spectacular Matier Glacier that looms high above Upper Joffre Lake.

ASCEND AND DESCEND

 400m  400m

SCENERY



PRACTICAL INFO



Why the Joffre Lakes

Joffre Lakes offers a little bit of everything you could want in a day hike. At 11km, its not too long, but with a steady uphill climb and several technical sections (including a moraine), it still offers a challenge. There are three turquoise, glacier-fed lakes, each more spectacular than the last. Along the way you are also rewarded with creek crossings, a waterfall, and several viewpoints of the surrounding mountain range. Finally, there's the scenery at the top, an up close view of the Matier Glacier and a rugged campsite for those wanting to spend the night.

When to go

JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC

Walking season is short in Joffre Lakes Provincial Park: in autumn you'll find snow. During the winter months its a popular destination for ice climbers.

Starting point



© Mapbox © OpenStreetMap

STARTING POINT

Duffey Lake Road, Squamish-Lillooet

TRANSPORT TO START



Take the Sea to Sky highway north past Whistler to Pemberton. At the Pemberton Junction (Petro Canada gas station) follow the signs that take you bearing right, towards Mount Currie. After about 7km you will turn right on Duffey Lake Road. Once on Duffey Lake Road, you will

wind up on paved road for about 21 km before seeing the signs for the Joffre Lakes Provincial Park parking lot. The trail starts right from parking lot.

How hard

Joffre Lakes is a moderate hike. Parks Services recently upgraded the first section of the trail to Middle Joffre Lake, and it is now well groomed and easy to follow.

Finding your way

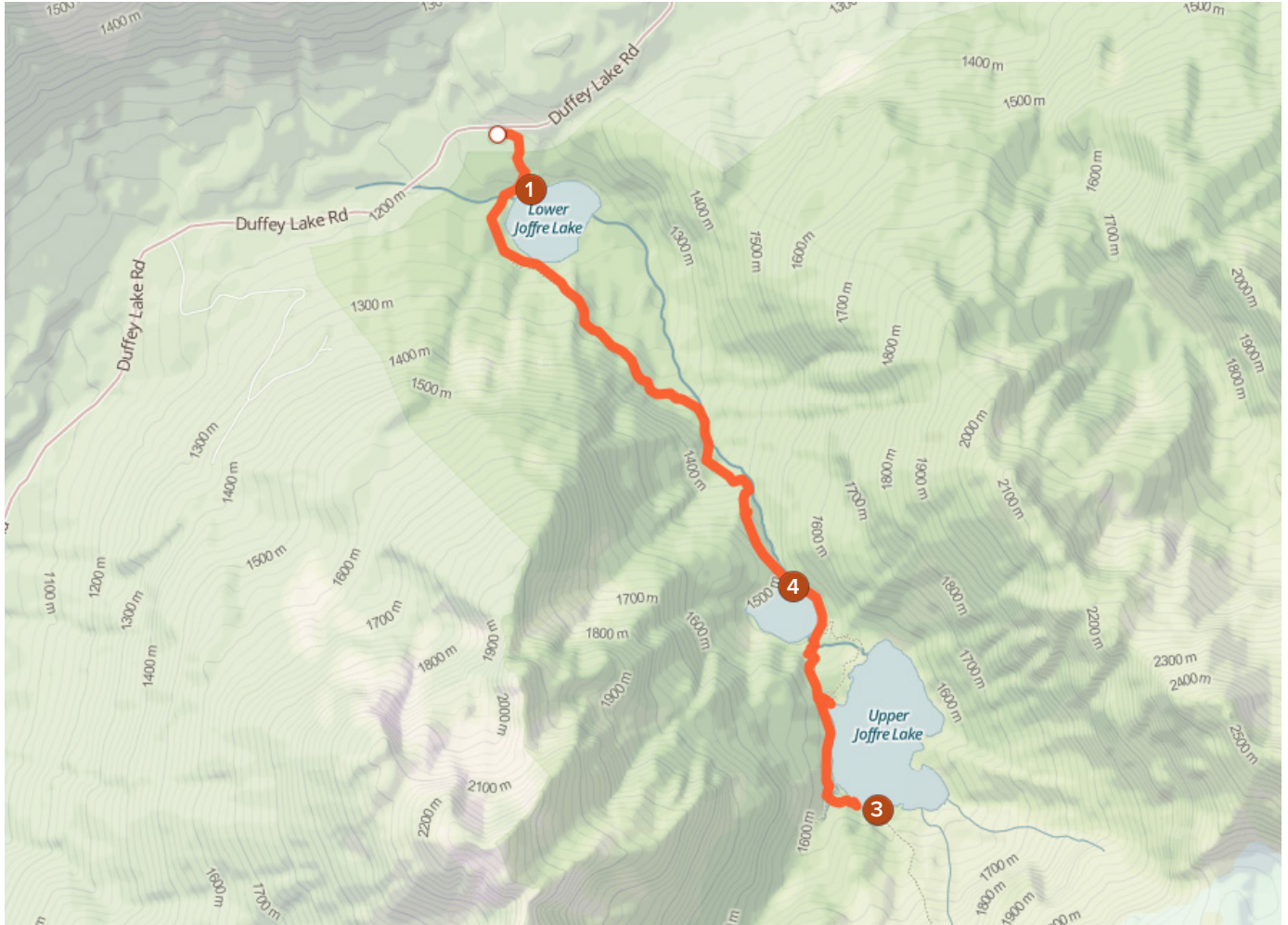
The trail is very well marked and maintained. Navigating the trail between the three lakes is quite easy.

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© Mapbox © OpenStreetMap

From the trailhead, Lower Joffre Lake is a flat 5 minute walk. The view from Lower Lake **1** will give you a good vantage point of your end goal; the spectacular Matier Glacier **2** that looms high above Upper Joffre Lake. **3**

Quickly doubling back from the Lower Lake viewpoint will take you onto the main trail that leads to the Middle **4** and Upper lakes. From here, the trail is a 5.5km upward climb through old growth forest, over a boulder field, and over Joffre Creek. You'll initially be walking on a gravel trail, that will turn into a dirt path, which will take you over your first crossing of Joffre Creek just below the lower

lake.

After the initial 30 minutes of climbing you will come to a fork. Stay left, and you will soon be at the boulder field. Traversing the large boulders, you will get some views of the coast mountain scenery and hear the roaring sound of Joffre Creek violently rushing just east of you.

Side note: The boulder field is technically called a 'moraine'; "a mass of rocks and sediment carried down and deposited by a glacier".

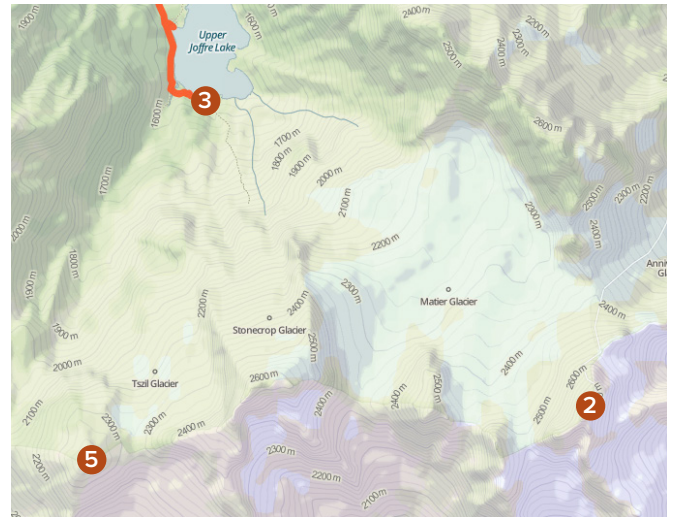
Once you have negotiated the moraine, the trail continues for about another 30 to 40 minutes before reaching a bridge. Take the bridge across Joffre Creek before arriving at Middle Joffre Lake **4** at an elevation of 1540m. By this point you have already covered most of the elevation gain and the final push to Upper Joffre Lake is fairly short. Regardless, the view at Middle Joffre Lake is beautiful and it is worth stopping here for a rest.

From here, the trail bends around Middle Joffre Lake and you once again cross Joffre Creek on the other side. This final stretch of the hike is very steep, but short and you will soon emerge from the trees alongside Upper Joffre Lake. The trail carries around to the south tip of the lake for a close up view of Matier Glacier. It may be tempting to scramble up to the glacier, but this is not wise as large chunks of ice can shear off at any moment, tumbling down to the lake.

From here, there are also routes to Mount Matier **2** and Tszil Mountain **5** – both of which require mountaineering experience to climb. At the tip of the lake you can find a spot to rest, eat and soak up the view of the enormous glacier and the surrounding mountains. Mount Cayoosh looks spectacular off in the distance to the north-west.

There is a small campsite **3** at the lake, which requires a backcountry camping permit between June 1 and September 30 (available for purchase from the B.C. Parks website).

After you have had lunch and snapped your photos of the glacier, you simply need to double-back on the trail back to the trailhead, allowing gravity to do the hard work this time.



Points of Interest

1 Lower Lake Viewpoint

2 Mount Matier

Mountain
Mount Matier Glacier

3 Upper Lake Campsite

Campsite
The camping spaces are small, and the terrain is rugged, but its hard to find a better view!

4 Middle Lake Viewpoint

5 Tszil Mountain

Mountain
Tszil Mountain Summit

About the author

Karl Woll

Born and raised in Vancouver, has been passionately exploring the area's local mountains over the last decade. Beyond hiking, Karl fulfills his desire to be in the outdoors by kayaking, cycling, scuba diving, snowboarding, and most frequently, trail running.

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